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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 003367

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DEPARTMENT FOR PRM, NEA/I AND NEA/ELA, GENEVA FOR RMA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/22/2018

TAGS: PREF PREL KPAL JO

SUBJECT: JORDAN CAUTIOUS ABOUT PROCESSING WALID PALESTINIAN

REFUGEES; WILLING TO CONSIDER TEST GROUPS

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (C) In separate November 19 meetings with Jordanian Minister for Planning and International Cooperation Suhair Al-Ali and Minister of Foreign Affairs Saleh Al-Bashir, PRM Acting A/S Witten asked about the possibility of processing in Jordan the Iraqi-Palestinians from the Walid camp on the Iraq side of the Syria-Iraq border. Witten explained that the USG is interested in processing in Jordan Palestinians referred by UNHCR for resettlement in the U.S. because of the logistical difficulties associated with trying to accomplish this in western Iraq and because of the large processing capacity at the IOM Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) in Amman.

¶2. (C) The proposal as outlined by Witten would be for UNHCR to transport small groups of Palestinians from the camp to Amman where the OPE would process them for resettlement to the U.S. The groups would then be transported back to the Walid camp to await word of their acceptance into the U.S. program; those accepted would then travel back to Amman to take commercial flights to the U.S. The Foreign Minister and MOPIC Minister both separately deferred to their security colleagues as having the last word, although the FM expressed initial reservations but then moderated his stance.

¶3. (C) In a separate meeting, the Ambassador raised the plan with the head of Jordan's General Intelligence Directorate, LTG Muhammad Dahabi, who initially expressed reservations. Dahabi added, however, that Jordan might be willing to proceed with small groups of Palestinians, with the option of canceling the operation should any of the refugees pose a security problem.

¶4. (C) Comment: While the skeptical security services would have the final say on a refugee processing operation, the caveat offered by Dahabi indicates some room for maneuver on this issue. PRM should urge UNHCR to propose to the GOJ a plan of action, which would occur under UNHCR supervision (with likely logistical support from IOM) and Jordanian authority, to move small numbers of refugees from the camp for U.S. resettlement processing. End comment.

¶5. (U) This message has been coordinated with A/S Witten.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/amman>

Beecroft
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